

Lecture Timothy Snyder (Yale University, Fall 2022)

The Making of Modern Ukraine

17 – Reforms, Recentralization, Dissidence – 1950s - 1970

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRdNxx295r8>

- 00:00 So today, we're gonna, we're a little bit behind chronologically.
I need to spend some more time on the 1940s and 1950s, which is what we're gonna do today.
And then the next lecture, we'll catch up to Khrushchev and Brezhnev.
What we need to make sure we understand because it's really important for everything that comes later is the transition out of the war.
And the reason why this is so important is that the Second World War, I mean in addition to the ways that it's so to speak, objectively important, the millions of deaths, the territorial changes, the movements of populations, it's also ideating, ideologically very important.
The Second World War is a kind of new starting point for the legitimization of the Soviet Union, and it's also a starting point for many other stories of many other nations about who they are.
- 01:03 The United States is far away from the conflict.
The United States lost relatively few people, it entered the conflict very late.
But nevertheless, the Second World War is very important for American self-formation.
The closer you get to the conflict, the more true this is, the state of Israel, Germany, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, contemporary countries, run their stories of themselves through the Second World War.
And in the case of the Ukraine and other countries we're working on, it's through the Second World War, but then also through a kind of Soviet myth of the Second World War.
So we have to make sure that we get the Second World War right in order for us to watch how that political memory forms and then we'll have some way to evaluate what's going on today.
So in the background of everything I'm doing today is 2022, and the way we're thinking about nations and the war in 2022, I'm gonna be talking about the '40's and '50's, but occasionally I'm going to lurch over and remind you to look for a connection.
- 02:03 Okay so was anybody else in New York over the weekend? I was in, see, oh yeah, I was hoping I was gonna be the coolest one in class for once, all right.
So I was in New York over the weekend and I saw the new Tom Stoppard play.
That's cool, right, that's cool? Okay, good, I'm reassured.
The new Tom Stoppard play is very, it's for him, it's very straightforward, it's very historicist, it's about a family, an Austrian Jewish, partly Jewish Austrian family in the late 19th century into the second half of the 20th century and I don't want to spoil the end, but you know, in the end, most of them die at Auschwitz.
The problem with that is that most Austrian Jews didn't die at Auschwitz, like that's an easy way to close a play because everyone thinks the Holocaust is Auschwitz and Auschwitz is the Holocaust.
And so naturally, if you're trying to bring it all to a tragic conclusion, which he does very

powerfully, having the children die at Auschwitz is the way to do that.

03:05 The problem though historically is that most Austrian Jews died in Belarus.

And once you know that odd little fact, then you are reminded that the Second World War took place on a territory.

And you might move from there to remembering that the second world war happened as a result of German imperialism towards the East.

So the actual geography of the Holocaust reminds you that the Germans were in a certain place, they were trying to conquer a certain place, and that the killing began and actually continued in all sorts of places, which we often forget, like Minsk, like Riga.

Auschwitz of course, was a center of the Holocaust, around a million Jews were killed there, more than a million people were killed there.

But this little artifact of our culture where everything leads to Auschwitz has the consequence of making this think that everything in some way leads to nowhere because Auschwitz is not a place where you have to know where it is on the map, right? I mean, maybe you do, maybe you've been there, but it functions as a kind of nowhere, as a kind of zero point, as a kind of kind of black hole where everything ends.

04:13 Right, literature ends, philosophy ends, thought ends.

Right, Primo Levi says "Here there is no why".

But actually, the Holocaust took place in a place, and Auschwitz is also a place, and if this were a different class, we would spend more time on what kind of a place Auschwitz was.

But here, what I'm trying, the point I'm trying to get across is how deep in our culture it goes that Eastern Europe isn't really a place, that these territories don't really matter.

And that in extremists, we will look away from the actual territories.

And in extremists, we'll find this reference point, which is familiar, but which gets us not looking at Ukraine or the Baltic states or Belarus or Poland or western Russia, which is where the Holocaust was actually centered.

The reason I'm dwelling on this is that whether or not you think about the territories is going to affect how you think about responsibility for the war.

05:03 And if we think about the lecture, so if you think about the lecture last time about the German factor, right, if you're a German and you don't know that there was a German factor in Ukrainian history, you're not gonna be thinking about the German factor, right? If your view of the war doesn't have territory in it, then it also doesn't have most of the peoples in it and your recollection is going to have those peoples in it, and you're not going to be concerned about how you come to terms with those things.

So part of colonialism is forgetting about colonialism, right, that's part of the trick.

Part of being a colonialist, a good colonialist forgets about colonialism, right, and has various devices of doing so.

The European Union for all of its undoubted virtues is a project of forgetting about colonialism.

They're not the only people, there are other ways to do it, but what the European Union does is it tells a story about how the Europeans fought the Second World War, they realized war was a very bad thing, and therefore they chose peace, and unlike the Americans, they stopped fighting wars.

06:03 Yes, exactly, exclamation point, but that's not true, that's not true.

What happened instead is that Europeans kept fighting wars until, this is much more banal, until they lost them, which admittedly is like, that doesn't really work as the beginning of the speech in Brussels, you know, it doesn't really work as educational curriculum in Europe but that's the truth.

The Germans lost the Second World War, which is a colonial war.

The French lost in Southeast Asia, they lost in North Africa.

The Portuguese and the Spanish couldn't hold out in Africa any longer, right, and so on and so forth.

At which point, they then joined together to this European integration process, at which point they started telling the story about how Europeans are very peaceful people, and we've always been very peaceful, and we integrate and look at us, and then look at the Americans, they're bad, right? That's actually the European national anthem.

It's set to a tune by Beethoven but those are the words.

If you don't know German, that's actually what they're singing, okay.

07:05 Don't email me about that.

Okay.

All right.

It's "Ode to Joy" of course, in fact.

It's actually "Ode to Joy", the words are by Schiller.

But the point is that, there's a serious point here, which is that although the European Union is, we'll talk more about this, but a theme of this class is the world of empire and what you do after empire, right? And the European Union is an answer to what to do after empire.

You go back to Europe and you don't talk about empire very much and you cooperate with one another, which has many good sides.

But what it means is that you don't talk about empire.

The Dutch don't talk so much about Indonesia, right? And the Germans do talk about the Holocaust, one has to give them credit for that, they absolutely do talk about the Holocaust, and in that sense, they do better than everybody else, but what they don't talk about is imperial territory.

They don't really talk about empire or colonization, which really is the operative framework for what they were doing in Ukraine.

08:05 And so the tricky part of all this is that if you do, if you do memory of the Holocaust, but without territory and without the other people, you lose sight of the fact that you yourself were the colonizer.

And since you lose sight of the fact that you yourself were the colonizer, you tend to forget the things that colonization involves, like putting local people into awkward, difficult positions.

Right, so you don't colonize by yourself, there are always more local people involved than there are colonizers involved, there have to be just mathematically.

And when you're the colonizer, one of the things that you're doing is you are creating structures that local people will be taking part in.

And later on when you remember you're the colonizer, that's one of the things that you think about, right? So if you're thinking about the European colonization of North America, you don't just think about what the Europeans did to the native peoples of North America, you think about how they turned them against each other and how they used one tribe against each other and so on and so forth.

09:00 That's part of the story, right? Likewise, when Germany invades Eastern Europe and rallies collaborators, yes, the nation should come to terms with their history of collaboration in so far as it exists, but the Germans also should recognize that this is part of their history, right, the history of colonization.

Now why am I talking about all this? I'm talking about all this because in the 21st century, we have a kind of problem, which this lecture is going to lead us to understand I hope, which is that before this war in 2022 broke out, Ukraine didn't really exist as a subject in Germany.

Ukrainians didn't really exist as a full-fledged people from the German point of view.

Insofar as they existed, they very often existed as a trigger for luxury, like you do this better, you do that better, you do the other thing better.

You learn your lesson from the Second World War, the way that we learned our lesson from the Second World War.

But that analogy doesn't make sense because the Germans were the colonizer in the

Second World War, and they colonized Ukraine, right? So you can't lecture, you know, you can't lecture, as an American, you can't lecture the Osage about this.

10:06 You have to sort of realize what you did to the Osage.

And the Germans weren't there yet.

And that had the odd consequence that up until 2022, the Germans and the Russians were able to find a kind of common ground about Ukraine along the lines of they don't really exist.

They're sort of, they're kind of a problem for us, they're sort of complicated, they don't really exist.

And there was a divvying up of roles about the Second World War, which I hope we'll be able to challenge after this class where Germany and Russia up to 2022, this is now all being reconsidered, but up to 2022, the Germans and the Russians had this kind of nice deal where they divided the good things about the war.

What the German said was, we get the good thing of having learned all about it and apologized.

And the Russians said, we get the good thing of having been the victims and the victors, right, which is a nice position to be in.

And everybody else kind of complicates the story, right? And so from from those positions, you know, you can see eye to eye like it's too bad that we invaded you but it's a good thing you won and so on and everyone else in the middle kind of gets forgotten, all those territories, those awkward territories get forgotten.

11:16 Together, we can reproduce stereotypes about Ukraine, together, we can talk about how it's all corrupt.

Together, we can talk about how they don't really have a language, you know, and so on.

We can do all these things that are quite colonial and not notice it.

together. We can build a pipeline.

Together, we can become economically dependent upon you.

All of this goes back to the Second World War.

All of it goes back to the German colonization, which I talked about last time.

This time, we're going to be talking about the way that the Soviet Union handled the Second World War.

Without this knowledge, we can't get to where we are now, the '70's, '80's, '90's, 21st century and 2022.

Okay, so I tried to make clear the memory stakes.

Now let me talk about some of the, some of the actual events.

12:00 What we're gonna do today is we're gonna get through the war into the end of Stalin so you can see how this all gets set up.

And the basic story is going to be something like the war is processed as victimhood and victory, but for Russians more than for other people, right? Once you know that that process begins and begins in 1945, the rest of it step by step to Putin becomes less confusing.

And the way that the Russians and the Germans are going to come to this weird common understanding about the war also becomes less confusing.

Okay so history.

I'm gonna take what seems like a big lateral step now and talk about, and talk about the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the ethnic cleansing of Poles during the Second World War.

How is this not a big lateral step? It's not a big lateral step because in order to understand the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and its ethnic cleansing of Poles during the war, you have to understand the war, and you have to understand Soviet and German policies during the war.

- 13:14 So, I mean to be very clear, if you're a Ukrainian and you are identifying yourself with this tradition of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, then there are things that you need to know and things you have to consider and they will be in this lecture.
- But analytically, if we're gonna understand where it came from, we have to know what Soviet policy was and what German policy was because there's a sort of mystery here.
- I mentioned the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists earlier as a minor, mostly imprisoned terrorist group in Interwar Poland, right? If it hadn't been for the Second World War, we probably wouldn't remember them, with all due respect, at all.
- They weren't that many people.
- They didn't matter that much in Poland except for the few assassinations, and they didn't really matter anywhere else.
- I'm definitely getting email about that, but that's the truth, right? The Second World War changed the setup dramatically.
- 14:03 How so? Well inside Poland, by the '30's, there was a consensus among Ukrainian political life to accept the Polish state.
- That was hard, it was disappointing that there was no Ukrainian state.
- But by the second half of the 1930s, people generally understood that the Soviet Union was much worse, that Poland was threatened, and therefore we accept the legality of the Polish state, we try to function within it.
- That position, which was the majority Ukrainian position by the second half of the 1930s, becomes impossible when? - [Student] When Poland ceases to exist.
- Poland ceases to exist, 100% exactly right.
- I mean it seems like such an easy point, but the difference between a state existing and not existing is traumatic for all of the citizens, but especially for the national minorities.
- If this were a class on the Holocaust, I would now be spending a lot more time on that point with respect to the Jews.
- 15:04 Because membership in a state which treats you poorly is still very much different than non-membership in any state, right, that's the argument in "Black Earth".
- For the Ukrainians, it suddenly means there's no one to cooperate with that was a legitimate state a day before.
- The democratic parties, like UNDO, which I mentioned last time, they melt away, the left wing parties or the radical left wing parties, the communists and the cryptocommunist parties, they cooperate with the Soviets in what becomes Western Ukraine.
- And as we saw last time or the time before, they become disappointed.
- What's left after that is the extreme right.
- The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, the people who have experience, who have a coherent ideology of national superiority and discipline, who have practice being underground, unlike everybody else except the communists, and the communists have now come above ground and been disappointed, they have practice being underground.
- 16:04 They are willing to do things like use violence, which the other parties weren't necessarily willing to do.
- So they're advantaged in that way, if that's the word, by 1939.
- They are also advantaged, or they're also transformed by the war itself.
- So by the time the Germans invade the Soviet Union, the Soviets are just starting to find and deport the Ukrainian Nationalists.
- Germany invades the Soviet Union, and the Ukrainian Nationalists declare a Ukrainian state.
- That was not the German's idea at all, right? So you now know enough about the German understanding of Ukraine to understand that it didn't require the Ukrainians to found a state.
- On the contrary, Ukraine was meant to be colonized by Germany.

If there were some Ukrainians who would be useful in that, all the better, but the idea was to create a colony.

So in early July, 1941, sorry late June, 1941, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists decides to declare a state.

17:02 This effort fails dramatically because the Germans don't support it.

Okay, this is a crucial point here, right? The Germans are all in favor of Ukrainian non-political collaboration, but they have no interest in Ukrainian political collaboration.

So the people who declare independence generally get sent to camps.

Roughly four-fifths of the leaders of the Ukrainian Nationalists now go to German camps or prisons, including Stepan Bandera, who is the one who is most often mentioned.

So Bandera spent the Second World War, or most of the second world war in Bergbauernhilfe in a German camp.

He wrote letters, it's true, but he had very, I mean he's the figure that the Russians now fixate on, but he had very little to do directly with anything that happened in the war, because he was in a German camp.

But the reason this is relevant is that the, what was already a very radical organization was stripped of its top leadership.

And very, no offense, very young people were suddenly in charge, people who had, just for the record, that got one smile, okay, very young people were suddenly in charge.

18:07 And this meant that was what was already a kind of unpredictable, violent organization becomes more so.

What's worse, just before this happened, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists had split into two factions associated with these two leaders, Melnyk and Bandera, and those two factions set about killing one another, thereby further disrupting the leadership structure of the organization and making it more likely that it would carry out other kinds of disruptive acts.

Many of these people do in fact collaborate with the Germans.

We're talking about a few thousand people in a nation of tens of millions, but many of them do in fact collaborate with the Germans, some of them are in the German police force.

And this too, so this is where my earlier point comes in, none of that could have happened without the German invasion.

Right so these men, a few thousand of them, get a specific form of training as a result of the war.

19:04 Oh and it's more interesting than I just said because I know this is the hard part, you see, it already messed me up, when Poland is broken, the power that comes into Eastern Poland is the Soviet Union.

And a lot of young men then join, a lot of young Ukrainian men then join the Soviet militia.

And those deportations of Poles, which I mentioned earlier and will mention again, many times, the local militia men who carried them out were of Ukrainian nationality.

Here comes the part of the story that nobody likes, but which is, there are many parts that nobody likes, but this part particularly nobody likes.

When the Soviets are driven out by the Germans in summer 1941, a lot of those Soviet militia men of Ukrainian nationality then joined the Germans.

Now from a human perspective, this is totally normal.

If you're a young man who'd been making his living as a kind of quasi police officer on the countryside and one power goes away and the other power comes, and they also are in need of a job doing basically the same thing, you know, carrying a baton and driving people into deportation columns, different people to be sure, you're probably gonna take the same job, right, a lot of it is as banal as that.

20:15 But in our world of ideology where we think like, oh, they're Stalinists and they're Nazis, and they're this nation and they're that nation and that determines everything they do,

it's very hard to get our minds around the kind of basic social fact of double collaboration and the basic human realities, which led a lot of people to behave in that way.

But what this means is that a lot of these men who just had experience putting Poles and other people onto deportation trains are now serving as German auxiliary police, mostly enforcing the German idea of law on their fellow Ukrainians, but among other things, and this is very significant, taking part in the policy of the mass murder of Jews, which we know as the Holocaust.

So as always in a colonial situation, there are relatively few people from the colonial power.

21:01 About 1,400 Germans are directly involved in rounding up Jews.

About 12,000 locals are responsible for the murder of about 200,000 Jews in Western Ukraine.

I'm talking about Western Ukraine because that's where the nationalists were.

The people who were the locals, by the way, they were Ukrainians, but they weren't only Ukrainians.

There were also Poles, there were other people, but they were predominantly Ukrainians in this part of the world.

And then all of these Jews were murdered, usually by Germans, but certainly with the increasing help, especially after 1942 of locals by bullets at close range.

So that is the education that several thousand young men got.

They wouldn't have gotten this education in interwar Poland.

They certainly wouldn't have gotten it in an independent Ukraine.

They got it as a result of a joint German Soviet invasion and then as a result of a German invasion of the territory which the Soviets just took.

These men were then the ones who were directly involved in ethnic cleansing of Poles in 1943.

22:06 The conjuncture was that the Germans are being driven out, it looks like the Soviets are coming.

The Soviets, okay here comes another part of the story, which nobody likes, but which is absolutely true and important, the Soviets are recruiting people for their own partisan movement.

They are not picky at all about who those people are, right? So plenty of German collaborators go right into the Soviet partisan movement.

The Soviets are recruiting them.

They're trying to recruit German policemen to the Soviet partisans.

And one attempt to try to, one attempt to try to recruit them negatively by a provocation ends up with a lot of Ukrainian policemen, German policemen of Ukrainian nationality going over to what turns out to be a Ukrainian partisan movement.

And that Ukrainian partisan movement, the UPA on your sheet, these are the people who carry out the ethnic cleansing of Poles in the summer of 1943, tens of thousands.

23:06 The Poles respond, they kill a fair number of Ukrainians too, especially in Galicia.

And this end, and so you can imagine this scene now, by 1944 when the Red Army appears, the Red Army appears on territories where Ukrainians and Poles are busily killing one, killing one another, okay so.

Going back to where we are now, it is, it's just important to remember that these crimes, which have to be known about, this history which has to be known whether you're Ukrainian or not, if you're German, what you have to know about them is that they would never have happened without you, right? They would never have happened without you.

Without the German colonization policy, none of this would have happened.

The men who take part in all of this, if you're Ukrainian and you identify with Ukrainians, then you think about this and you think about responsibility, I think.

But if you're a German, you think, huh, it looks like we created the conditions in which something like this could happen, right? That is part of what doing colonial history or doing imperial history reflectively involves.

24:11 Okay and then yeah.

One more reflection about Ukraine.

The OUN, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, this small group which became important briefly during the Second World War and after, it had a very specific notion of what the Ukrainian nation was.

It was a hierarchical notion with a leader who would have absolute power, or a small group of men who would have absolute power.

The power would be exercised vertically.

The Ukrainian ethnos was thought to be a kind of super group, super, the ubermenschen among all the other people's.

That and more.

I'm just gonna note that that is very different than the notion of Ukrainian nationality which is prevailing now, right? And it's also very different, I'll note something else, they lost, the UPA lost, and the Ukrainian state as it's currently configured, which is on a very different basis with a Jewish democratically elected president and a very horizontally organized civil society, that Ukrainian setup is not only the one that we have, but it's the one which is winning a war.

25:15 Okay, I'm just gonna close with that and people can reflect on it 'cause we really have to get to where we're going now, which is Soviet ethnic cleansing.

So the Soviets, and this is another irony of the war or not irony, the Soviets pick up in many ways where the Germans, or locally in West Ukraine, where the Ukrainian Nationalists leave off.

The Soviets ethnically cleanse with ferocity and determination and with purpose at the end of the Second World War.

You'll remember that in the '30's, the Soviets were pioneers of what we now call ethnic cleansing with the national actions of 1937 and '38, directed against notably Poles, Latvians, Koreans.

During the Second World War, '40, '41, there were these four major deportations from territories taken from Poland.

26:03 When the Germans invaded, Stalin deported ethnic Germans for the first time on mass with such organization and such skill that the Germans themselves were envious, which by the way is a theme.

The Soviets had a deportation apparatus, which was very precise, which the Germans never actually, never actually had.

And in 1940, you can see the German policemen, who at that time were in a form of cooperation with the Soviets and observing what they were doing, in their correspondence back to Berlin, they would express this envy.

Like we don't have an apparatus like this, we couldn't do this kind of thing the way that the Soviets are doing.

But that's just to remind you that ethnic cleansing as a operational habit was already present.

When the Soviets take back territory in '43, '44, they take entire national groups and deport them deep into the Soviet depths.

I don't have time to go into all the examples now, but it's peoples of the caucuses and then it's peoples of Crimea.

27:03 And for the purposes of a class about Ukraine, the Crimean Tatars are the most important example.

The Crimean Tatars were of course, as we would say now, the indigenous people of the Crimean Peninsula.

As you'll remember from not so many weeks ago, the Crimean Khanate had been a state

for 400 years before the Russian Empire came in the late 18th century.

In the late 18th century, there were essentially no Russians in what was called New Russia, but the Crimean Tatars were about 100% of the population of the Crimean Peninsula.

By spring of 1944, that was zero.

That was zero because in March of 1944, 180,014 people identified as Crimean Tatars, men, women and children, were all forcibly deported, most of them to Uzbekistan on the logic that the entire Crimean Tatar people had collaborated with not to Germany.

And this logic, this totalizing logic was applied also to Crimean Tatars who returned from the front, including Crimean Tatars who had just been involved in taking Berlin.

28:07 They were all accused of being collaborators with Nazi Germany and all to a person deported far away from their home, such that the Crimean peninsula became empty of its indigenous population as of spring of 1944.

Minor note, they were deported in Studebakers, American automobiles, which is just another one of these interesting historical facts that are so essential for how things actually happen, but which everybody afterwards doesn't want to remember.

The Soviet Union was able to defend itself because of American economic aid.

The role that the United States played in the Second World War, at least on the European front, was mostly economic until close to the end and it was instantiated in our very relevant material aid to the Soviet Union even across the Pacific.

The Americans don't like to remember that because of the Cold War, the Soviets don't like to remember it because of the Cold War but that's the truth.

29:02 And if you think of the NKVD deporting the Crimean Tatars in Studebakers, in Jeeps, it can help you remember that constellation, which only a couple of years later would seem very strange.

So this notion that you deport an entire people because they supposedly collaborated as a people with the Nazis is helpful, not just so that we understand the particular failure of the Crimean Tatars, to which we're gonna return because it's a part of the history of Ukraine, but also it helps to place in context the general idea that I'm going to do something to you as a collective because you're Nazis, right, or because you collaborated with Nazis.

This is a very fruitful idea in Soviet and then Russian practice beginning no later than 1943.

So a similar idea is applied when the Soviets get to Western Ukraine where they then refer to Ukrainian Nationalists, the partisans I spoke about before, but also self-conscious Ukrainians in general as collaborators and associate them with Nazi rule.

30:13 And here, of course, there's a case thousands of these men and women had in fact collaborated.

It would be wrong to say that the entire group had collaborated, many of them had, but of course many other people had.

As no one will ever say, Russians also collaborated.

Right, every national group in the Soviet Union to say something which is not, which is controversial, but shouldn't be, every national group in the Soviet Union that was touched by German power collaborated.

They all did.

And any attempt by one group in the Soviet Union to say, "Well, we were innocent and the other ones were guilty", wrong.

The statistical evidence of which we have a fair bit shows that the only group which might have collaborated a little bit more than the others, not surprisingly, were the ethnic Germans themselves.

And the only group which perhaps maybe did a little bit less than the others as far as we can tell were the Belorussians.

31:01 But in general, everybody collaborated.

And so in general, the claim from the Soviet side that we were innocent but the other ones were collaborators is going to be wrong.

But Stalin had power so he could make this kind of argument and it was made in Western Ukraine.

The way that the Soviets approached Western Ukraine has two parts.

The first is defeat the nationalist movement, which they do.

The Ukrainian partisan army or insurgent army, this UPA, had been formed to fight the Soviets.

It's remembered in Poland, and it is remembered in Poland for ethnically cleansing the Poles, but it was built to fight the Soviet Union and it did I mean with, it should be said, with incredible determination.

They fought on for a very long time against both Soviet power and Polish communist power into the late '40's or even the early 1950s, although by that time, a lot of it was already controlled by the Soviets.

This was beaten down with counterinsurgency, which was just as violent as the insurgency itself.

A man called Nikita Khrushchev defined the principle that we should be more violent towards them than they are towards us because that's the only way to, that's the only way to defeat them.

32:10 That the Soviets use practices such as, you know, they would kill, when they killed a nationalist partisan, they would bring the body and drop it in the local village to see who would come out because whoever came out were the family and then the family would be deported because the principle was that the families would be deported.

So about 250,000 people were deported from Western Ukraine.

Probably a larger number of people were killed during this counter insurgency.

So one approach to Western Ukraine was to crush the insurgency, by killing the partisans and deporting their family members.

At this time, the Gulag became disproportionately Ukrainian.

The other approach was to fulfill the nationalist agenda.

And this is a feature of post-war communism in Eastern Europe in general is that it makes a hard ethnic turn.

So they fulfill the nationalist agenda, number one, by giving Ukraine westerly borders.

33:02 In 1945, the Soviet Union basically gets the same borders from the Americans and the British that they did from the Nazis in 1939.

Again, a point that no one really is super comfortable with, but with a few small exceptions.

Basically, the border of 1945 is the border of 1939, which means that once again, Soviet Ukraine is extended significantly to the west.

Some of this is from other places, but most of this is formally Polish territories.

And this deprived the Ukrainian Nationalists of an argument because Ukrainian Nationalists were all about creating a larger Ukraine.

And the Soviet Union continues the ethnic cleansing of local non-Ukrainians.

They basically, the NKVD basically comes in and picks up in a more organized way where the Ukrainian Nationalists had left off.

About 1.5 million pre-war Polish citizens will be deported from what becomes the western part of Soviet Ukraine.

34:01 And 1.5 million is a pretty big number.

Incidentally, of those Polish citizens, roughly 100,000 were Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who were deported westward to Poland because they were not Ukrainian.

And the reason this, there are many reasons that might seem strange to you, but one of them surely would be that this is an ethnic deportation.

So it wasn't about citizenship.

The Soviets were saying if you're an Eastern Slav, basically, if you're a Belorussian or a Ukrainian you can stay, but if you're a Pole or a Jew, then you have to go, then you have to go.

Right, so those people were deported.

Meanwhile, simultaneously, Ukrainians are being deported from Poland in the opposite direction, right? So the ethnic cleansing goes in both sides.

The first major policy of the Polish Communist regime is to deport Ukrainians, right? So they legitimate themselves on the basis of what had been a hard right Polish position before the Second World War.

35:07 Right before the Second World War the idea of deporting all the remaining Ukrainians would've been almost beyond the imagination.

It's the first thing that the communists do.

And in that way, their Polish communism is ethnic from the beginning.

It will be ethnic in other ways later on.

For example, in 1968, they will try to deport the Jews.

But the original sin, so to speak, is 1945, '46, '47.

In 1947, the Ukrainians who remain in Poland after this deportation, most of them are deported inside Poland in an action which is remembered as Operation Vistula, where the idea is to take Ukrainians and disperse them around the so-called recovered territories of Poland, the lands that Poland got from Germany.

And the idea was to take them as individuals so that they couldn't form Ukrainian communities again.

36:02 So that's the way that, that's the way the Ukrainian question was handled in communist Poland.

And it was associated with the attempt of the communist regime to legitimate itself quite openly from the beginning.

And the idea that Ukrainians were the enemy or one of the main enemies, the second enemy after the Germans, was very important to legitimating Polish communism all the way to the end.

The Ukrainians were demonized within Polish communism all the way through the 1980s.

The conflict between Poles and Ukrainians was very real, but it was exploited by the Polish communist regime.

And this was very convenient, of course, for the Soviets, right? Because the last thing the Soviets would want would be some kind of Polish Ukrainian cooperation or understanding.

And as we will see a few lectures down the line, when you get to Polish Ukrainian understanding about history and many other things, that is one of the factors that leads to the end of the Soviet Union, okay.

So this is a very, from the Polish point of view, this is of course a very real history.

37:02 In the post '89 period, both a president and a prime minister of Poland have had family members who were killed in Vilna, which they may or may not talk about publicly, right? This is a fact about Polish political life, which makes, I'm just gonna say this, just gonna note this, it makes the reception of the six or seven million Ukrainian refugees in 2022 much more interesting because a lot of people when they look at that, they say, "Oh, well, the Ukrainians and the Poles, well I mean surely they just like, they're friends, they look at them, they're white people, they must get along, right?" From a distance, it can look like that, right? But in fact, Ukrainian Polish relations are incredibly complicated, as you've probably gathered in this class.

And 1943 is one of many, and Ukrainians would point to others on the other side, of course, one of many very difficult moments in Ukrainian Polish relations.

So the 2022 thing is actually much, much more interesting than it looks.

A lot of Americans looked at it from our own optic and didn't see like, oh wow, like something special is actually happening here, which I think it's fair to say there was.

38:06 Okay, the underlying move here though, as you've noticed, is a move towards, is a move towards what you could think of as a quietly emerging Russian ethnic definition of the Soviet state where ethnicity itself has become much more important.

Soviet Ukraine has been enlarged, it's been reformed, it has a slightly different, has a different kind of population with fewer Poles, and of course, far fewer Jews who have been murdered in the Holocaust.

But underneath that, there's a notion that it's ethnicity that matters and that it's the Russian ethnicity which is the most important.

And to make this case, which is the last thing we're gonna talk about, I'm gonna start with something that Stalin said at the end of the war, two weeks after the end of the war, 24 May, 1945.

39:04 And this is when Stalin makes his famous toast to the great Russian nation, which I'm gonna read to you in its entirety because it's important.

Okay, "Comrades, permit me to propose one more last toast.

I should like to propose a toast to the health of our Soviet people, and in the first place, the Russian people.

I drink in the first place to the health of the Russian people because it is the most outstanding nation of all the nations forming the Soviet Union.

I propose a toast to the health of the Russian people because it has won in this war universal recognition as the leading force of the Soviet Union among all the peoples of our country.

I propose a toast to the health of the Russian people, not only because it is leading people, but because it possesses a clear mind, a staunch character and patience.

Our government made not a few errors.

We experienced at moments of desperate situation in 1941, 1942, when our army was retreating, abandoning our own villages and towns, et cetera, et cetera.

A different people could have said to the government, you have failed to justify expectations.

Go away, we shall install another government, which will conclude peace with Germany and ensure us a quiet life.

40:01 The Russian people, however, did not take this path because it trusted the correctness of the policy of its government and it made sacrifices to ensure the route of Germany.

The confidence of the Russian people in the Soviet government proved to be that decisive force which ensured the historic victory over the enemy of humanity, over fascism.

Thanks to it, the Russian people for this confidence.

To the health of the Russian people." Now there's something ironic about a toast to fascism where you talk about how your nation is better than everybody else's.

Yes? - [Student] Why is he saying this? He's Georgian, right? - Yeah, yeah, he's Georgian, that's right, he's Georgian.

But you don't, you know, you don't have to belong to a nation to use or even believe in an ethnic idea.

But see, I want you to note the difficulties in all this.

Russia was great, and I'm now only slightly paraphrasing because it was less touched by German power than Belarus and Ukraine.

You see? The Russians are steadfast and patient, that's Stalin's spin, because they're not occupied.

41:04 Of course, the German war did kill many Russians.

The most atrocious example is the hunger, the terror siege, the hunger siege of Leningrad in which more than a million people are killed.

The scale of Russian death is horrible from a Western point of view, it's terrifying.

But it's much less proportionately than the scale of death in Belarus and Ukraine, much less, even, not just relatively, but with respect to Ukraine, absolutely.

It's fewer people, fewer civilians killed than Russians.

And the reason why, you know, the reason why the Soviet Union won the Second World War, isn't that just that Russians came running to the rescue.

You know, on the contrary, more Ukrainian soldiers die fighting the Germans in the Red Army than Americans, British and French put together.

And when the Red Army is pushing back through Ukraine and taking horrible losses, which it does, of all of its peoples, including the Russians for sure, but it's picking up its reserves from Ukraine as it's then moving into Poland and towards Berlin.

42:09 So what happens is ironically here by 1945, is that you have this capacity to decide which nation is great, which nation is greater than the other nation.

And you have implicitly also the power to decide who's the collaborator and who is not.

And that's going to be the legacy of the Second World War, a major legacy of the Second World War for Soviet and Russian power for decades onwards.

And it's based on what I wouldn't hesitate to call a flat out totalitarian lie, because you see what's happened by 1945.

The man who after Hitler is most personally responsible for beginning the Second World War, and indeed, the man who with Hitler began the second world war as an ally in 1939, now has the authority to define who are the real collaborators, right? And no one is ever supposed to think about that.

43:07 And indeed, in Russia today, there's a law which forbids you from mentioning anything along those lines in any kind of media, right? But this power to have been the ally of Hitler and then to tell you who the ally of Hitler is is very important for Soviet practice and it also helps a great deal now.

If you're trying to understand the Russian rhetoric about Nazis and de-Nazification and fascism and so on, it helps a lot to know that the Nazis are who we say they are, right? The Nazis are who we say they are and that's what it means, the collaborators are who we say they are.

So as the Cold War begins, there's a new cultural focus on Ukraine, which is defined by a fellow called Zhdanov in a larger cultural turn.

And the attitude about Ukraine is something like this, that there are two camps in the world, and the camps are, they call them the democracies.

44:06 Right, Zhdanov when he says the democracies, he means us, he means he means the Soviet Union and its allies, and then there are the fascists, the capitalists.

And in these two camps, what's interesting about these camps, there's not really any longer a vision of progress.

And let me pause on that because it's really, really important.

After the Second World War, the Soviet notion of legitimacy is gonna be based much less on economics and much more on culture.

And the reason for this is that the Stalinist transformation of the Soviet economy has essentially been completed.

Awkwardly, the Stalinist transformation of the Soviet economy did not actually bring socialism in any sense.

I mean we can call it socialism if you want, we can call it state socialism, we can call it whatever, but it's not socialism in the sense understood by Marx.

We do not have harmony, we do not have equality.

45:01 We don't have any of the things which any of the 19th century idealists, or Marx in is more sentimental moments, described.

None of that prevails in the Soviet Union.

But the Stalinist transformation is over.

Collectivization has happened.

The factories have been built, the mines have been dug.

You can dig some more, you can build some more, but essentially the transformation has happened and it hasn't brought the expected result.

Instead, there's been a terrifying war, which the Soviet Union just barely won with the help of the Americans, which has to be now forgotten very quickly.

But this fundamentally, the fact that the Soviet transformation is over, and you have this shift from economics to culture, means that the whole nature of the way the Soviets are gonna define themselves against the West is now a little bit different.

It has much more to do with a notion of cultural innocence.

So when Zhdanov says there are two camps, he means we are the good guys and the capitalists are the bad guys.

The capitalists who were our allies a moment ago now turn out to be fascists.

And by the way, the dance that the Americans do is almost as extraordinary, right? I mean Stalin's on the cover of Life Magazine in 1943 and there's a whole special issue which I have in my office, come to office hours, it'd be great to see you guys, but there's a whole special issue about how wonderful the great Russian people are and how they're the leader of all the peoples of the Soviet Union and how the great Russian people are just like America.

46:23 It's really interesting if you're in American studies because it's just like America, like the Russians are just like the white people, like they're in charge.

And look, there's some pictures of people of color and they're kind of subordinate, but they like being ruled by these white people, the Russians, who are just like the American white people.

But the point is that the Americans also had to make this turn where they went from being the allies of the Soviet Union who were all Democrats in the sense of small D right, Hollywood was in on this.

There were great movies about how the Soviets were the greatest democracy in the world.

We had this shift from nought to Cold War in just a few years.

Okay, but the way the Soviets do it is they say, this is all, you know, this is fundamentally about fascism.

47:02 the fascists or who we say they are, but here's the important point.

The important point is that this then becomes about cultural innocence.

And the lodestone of what's special about the Soviet Union is no longer the economic transformation.

That's happened, it turned out to be a bit of a dud, can't really say so.

The lodestone of what's special about the Soviet Union is now much more Russian culture.

And Zhdanov, the same fellow who gives us this whole two camps idea, is also responsible for a cultural policy in which the idea is that Russian culture is basically good culture so long as it's not contaminated by outside influences.

And the Russian writers and poets who are then persecuted are persecuted because they've allowed alien influences, cosmopolitan influences into Russian literature.

And on this account of the way the world works, naturally, Ukrainian culture is going to be downgraded because Ukrainian culture is closer to the west, it's been contaminated most recently by German occupation, right? And so this becomes another way that Russia is elevated as against Ukraine.

48:13 And I just want to just give you one little thought about what this four ordains.

We're not there yet.

Okay, Stalin's still in power, it's now the early 1950s, let's say, and we're not there yet, but we're now going to be reach into the question of, well, if this is all about cultures and

Russian culture is the one that's central and pure and important and Ukraine is kind of a little bit defiled and on the outside, what is Ukraine? Khrushchev has an answer to that.

Khrushchev's answer, and we'll talk about this next time, is Ukraine is a slightly less important culture, which always wanted to join Russia.

So it exists but the point of its existence was to join Russia, right? Which is an elegant answer and is taken up by many people and it becomes very popular.

And then Brezhnev will have another answer, which is that now that Ukraine has joined Russia de facto and forever, culture, it's going to become something which is much less important, culture is just going to become something that you have at home.

49:10

The Ukrainian language will be something that maybe you have at home or on the countryside, but the Soviet Union is gonna be run as a kind of very efficient technical administrative apparatus in which Russian is going to be the neutral language that everyone's going to use and everyone's going to know.

So Khrushchev and Brezhnev have different answers about what Ukraine is going to be within the Soviet Union, we'll spend more time on them.

But at the base is this is this thing which happens during the second world war, which is that Ukraine, precisely because Ukraine is under occupation and Ukrainians suffer more, has to be presented as contaminated and dangerous, and precisely because the economic transformation is over and there's a shift now towards culture, there's the potential for a shift towards nostalgia, where the Soviet Union is gonna become with time not just more about culture and economics, but more about the past than about the present or the future, right? By the time we get to Brezhnev, the cult of the Second World War will have replaced the revolution as the central focus of the Soviet Union as a whole.

50:11

And if everything's about the past and if everything's about nostalgia, then you're setting yourself up for actually, you know, a very right wing view of the world.

And then the process that you get when the Soviet Union falls apart and you get to today becomes less mysterious.

Okay, trying to do a lot today.

Hope it came through.

Thank you very much.